

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) A mechanism for a marine propulsion system, comprising:

a gear member having an axis of rotation;

a generally cylindrical member having a first slot formed therein; ~~and~~

a retaining member attached to said gear member, said retaining member having a first protuberance shaped to pass through said first slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical member in response to rotation of said gear member about said axis of rotation, whereby said gear member is retained axially relative to said generally cylindrical member when said first protuberance ~~is~~ not aligned with said first slot and said gear member is free to move axially away from said generally cylindrical member when said first protuberance is aligned with said first slot;

a bearing assembly engaged between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member and permitting rotation of said retaining member about said axis relative to said generally cylindrical member.

Claim 2 (Original) The mechanism of claim 1, further comprising:

a bearing carrier, said generally cylindrical member being attached to said bearing carrier.

Claim 3 (Original) The mechanism of claim 1, wherein:

said generally cylindrical member is a bearing adaptor.

Claim 4 (Canceled)

Claim 5 (Currently Amended) The mechanism of claim 1, further comprising:

a thrust bearing disposed between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member, said thrust bearing being generally concentric with said axis of rotation, said thrust bearing having a first axial face axially facing and engaging said gear member, and a second

distally oppositely facing axial face axially facing and engaging said generally cylindrical member.

Claim 6 (Original) The mechanism of claim 1, further comprising:

5 a thrust ring and a seal ring disposed between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member, said thrust ring and seal ring being generally concentric with said axis of rotation.

Claim 7 (Original) The mechanism of claim 1, wherein:

10 said generally cylindrical member has a second slot formed therein.

Claim 8 (Original) The mechanism of claim 7, wherein:

said retaining member has a second protuberance shaped to pass through said second slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical member in response to rotation  
15 of said gear member about said axis of rotation.

Claim 9 (Original) The mechanism of claim 8, wherein:

said first and second protuberances are disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said retaining member.

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Claim 10 (Currently Amended) The mechanism of claim ~~10~~7, wherein:

said first and second slots are disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said generally cylindrical member.

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Claim 11 (Original) The mechanism of claim 10, wherein:

said gear member is a bevel gear.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended) A mechanism for a marine propulsion system, comprising:

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a gear member having an axis of rotation;

a generally cylindrical member having a first slot formed therein;

a retaining member attached to said gear member, said retaining member having a first protuberance shaped to pass through said first slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical member in response to rotation of said gear member about said axis of rotation, whereby said gear member is retained axially relative to said generally cylindrical member when said first protuberance ~~is~~ not aligned with said first slot and said gear member is free to move axially away from said generally cylindrical member when said first protuberance is aligned with said first slot; ~~and~~

a bearing carrier, said generally cylindrical member being attached to said bearing carrier;

a bearing assembly engaged between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member and permitting rotation of said retaining member about said axis relative to said generally cylindrical member.

Claim 13 (Original) The mechanism of claim 12, further comprising:

a thrust bearing disposed between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member, said thrust bearing being generally concentric with said axis of rotation.

Claim 14 (Original) The mechanism of claim 13, wherein:

said generally cylindrical member has a second slot formed therein.

Claim 15 (Original) The mechanism of claim 14, wherein:

said retaining member has a second protuberance shaped to pass through said second slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical member in response to rotation of said gear member about said axis of rotation.

Claim 16 (Original) The mechanism of claim 15, wherein:

said first and second protuberances are disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said retaining member; and

said first and second slots are disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said generally cylindrical member.

Claim 17 (Original) The mechanism of claim 16, wherein:  
said gear member is a bevel gear.

Claim 18 (Canceled)

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Claim 19 (Currently Amended) A mechanism for a marine propulsion system, comprising:

a bevel gear having an axis of rotation;

a generally cylindrical bearing adaptor having a first slot and a second slot formed therein; ~~and~~

10 a retaining member attached to said bevel gear, said retaining member having a first protuberance shaped to pass through said first slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor in response to rotation of said bevel gear about said axis of rotation, whereby said bevel gear is retained axially relative to said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor when said first protuberance is not aligned with said first slot and said bevel gear is  
15 free to move axially away from said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor when said first protuberance is aligned with said first slot, said retaining member having a second protuberance shaped to pass through said second slot and move into interfering relation with said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor in response to rotation of said bevel gear about said axis of rotation;

20 a bearing assembly engaged between said gear member and said generally cylindrical member and permitting rotation of said retaining member about said axis relative to said generally cylindrical member.

Claim 20 (Currently Amended) The mechanism of claim 19, further comprising:

25 a bearing carrier, said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor being attached to said bearing carrier;

said bearing assembly comprising a roller bearing assembly attached to said bearing adaptor;

30 a thrust bearing disposed between said bevel gear and said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor, said thrust bearing being generally concentric with said axis of rotation, said thrust bearing having a first axial face axially facing and engaging said gear member, and a second distally oppositely facing axial face axially facing and engaging said generally cylindrical

member; and

a thrust ring and a seal ring disposed between said bevel gear and said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor, said thrust ring and seal ring being generally concentric with said axis of rotation, said first and second protuberances being disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said retaining member, said first and second slots being disposed at diametrically opposite positions on said generally cylindrical bearing adaptor.

Claim 21 (New) The mechanism of claim 1, wherein said retaining member and said first protuberance are fixed relative to said gear member.

Claim 22 (New) The mechanism of claim 1, wherein said bearing assembly extends axially to an axial end, said protuberance and said slot extend along a radial projection bridging between said generally cylindrical member and said retaining member axially beyond said axial end of said bearing assembly, said radial bridging projection being axially aligned with said bearing assembly and axially facing and axially spaced from said axial end of said bearing assembly.